April 25, 2003

WorkFirst Targeted Wage Initiative
Statewide Implementation Plan

Background

The Targeted Wage Initiative (TWI) is designed to be a locally driven partnership structured to better prepare customers for the labor market and assist them in finding higher paying initial jobs as soon as possible. TWI adds to existing activities, and does not change the concept of assisting families to increase their income through employment. The principles driving the TWI are highlighted in the following:

- The DSHS customer orientation has been revitalized and clearly lets each customer know about services and opportunities available to them through participation in the TWI. Customers who are able to participate are referred to job search.

- All customers receive an up-front employment and education assessment that is the cornerstone of activities in job search. Assessment results will be used as a referral tool to guide customers to businesses in their local labor market, and/or to available training provided by the local community colleges.

- Customers participate in intense job search preparation activities to increase job search competencies. TWI builds greater customer engagement, intensity and structure into job search focusing customers toward higher wages and more effectively connecting them with employers.

- Customers are connected with targeted employers through business outreach activities that include job matching with local employers, local hiring events, and coordination with WorkSource services and On-the-Job-Training. (Targeted employers are those local businesses identified during the job skills assessment process that would potentially have job openings that match the skills of the customers and offer higher paying wages.)

- Local colleges or Community Based Organizations (CB)s) will provide short-term employment skills training designed to prepare customers for specific local employment opportunities and enhance immediate employability.

Pilot Sites

In January 2003, TWI implementation began at four sites across the state at: Aberdeen, Spokane (includes all three locations), Walla Walla and Federal Way. The WorkFirst partners in conjunction with their respective Field Operations,

selected these locations as "Learning Labs" to test different TWI strategies and tools in order to determine program effectiveness.

Pilot Site Review
In mid-April, after several months of operation, the four partner agencies will team up to review the sites to determine if TWI is working, how local partners have implemented TWI and determine effects of the strategies. (TWI strategies that do not positively impact in assisting families to increase their income through employment will be evaluated and improved or eliminated.)

An evaluation process and tool has been developed that reviews: process and performance, customer engagement and participation, business outreach, training, program orientation, the job assessment tools and process, use of resources, facilities, Best Practices, etc. Customer surveys will also be a part of the evaluation.

Review of Findings
Successful statewide implementation of TWI requires a thorough review of the TWI evaluation and findings. This will be critical to ensure a successful implementation program.

Initial findings will determine if TWI makes a positive impact on customers and if the TWI model is working as planned. It will determine which strategies and best practices will be implemented statewide, which assessment tools work and what items will be eliminated. The review will demonstrate whether or not the customers are getting better paying initial jobs.

TWI strategies that will be considered include:
- Evaluation of the employment and education assessment tools, selection of tool(s) to be implemented statewide.
- Availability of the tool statewide
- Expense of the assessment tool, if any
- Resources required: computers, staff, facilities, etc.
- Orientation Process
- Business Outreach activities: are resources available to customers for increased access to better jobs, employer contacts and hiring events, etc.
- Increased availability to training through local colleges that can lead to higher wages and job retention.
- Determine if customers are better prepared for the labor market and finding higher paying initial jobs, and
- Best Practices.

In addition, the following will also be considered when analyzing evaluation findings:

- Review of current WorkFirst policies and procedures to update in order to include TWI
- New policies, if necessary
- Update WorkFirst Handbook
- Staff training and technical assistance statewide

It is anticipated that TWI strategies will be refined and producing positive results before statewide implementation begins July 1, 2003.

Statewide Implementation
WorkFirst partners are proposing a "phased in approach" for TWI implementation beginning in July 2003, the second phase in September and the third phase in November 2003.

- Attached is the list of proposed site implementation by Phase.

- **Local Planning**
  The partners, working together, will design a site assessment process to help local partners prepare their TWI implementation plans. The process will assess each site's ability to implement TWI and determine needs. Site evaluation will include the following criteria: Facilities, Staffing, Resources, Employment and Education Assessment Tools currently at the site, Short term training, Equipment, Caseload size, Labor market, Business Outreach, and Partnership.

  The partners have agreed to bring up TWI statewide within current funds.

  In addition, the WorkFirst Field partners, with assistance from the WorkFirst Policy partners, will develop TWI implementation guidelines. Similar to the process used to implement the four TWI Learning Labs, the local WorkFirst partners will develop TWI Implementation and Operation Plans for each site. Sites will be provided expectations for what needs to be in the plans, what services should be offer via the TWI, sample plans, and technical assistance to put their plans together. Local plans will be reviewed, modified and approved prior to implementation.

- **Policies and Procedures**
  Prior to Phase 1 of TWI statewide implementation, the partners will also review the WorkFirst Handbook, as well as internal and external policies and procedures to ensure that TWI is included. New policies and procedures will be developed as necessary. The expectation is that all TWI related policies changes and new policies will be approved and published to the field by July 1 implementation date.

- **Communications Strategy**
  A comprehensive TWI Communication Strategy will be developed in order to alert stakeholders as well as all partner staff about the TWI statewide implementation. The expectation is that both internally and externally, there is a comprehensive understanding about what TWI is, the expected outcomes for WorkFirst customers and the partnerships efforts to continually improve services and delivery based on stakeholder feedback.

- **Information Systems**
  WorkFirst automation systems such as e-JAS and CATS will be reviewed to ensure that they support the TWI statewide implementation. Any changes to the piloted Success Plan, the eight week evaluation, TWI process reports, etc. are expected to occur prior to Phase I of the implementation.

- **Training**
  Technical assistance and training will be identified and provided. Training around Employment and Education assessment tools, policies and procedures, etc. will be scheduled as required.

- **WorkFirst Monitoring Tools**
  The partners will review and revise the current WorkFirst automated monitoring package to reflect TWI. It is anticipated that when TWI is fully implemented statewide, WorkFirst teams will review site operations and performance.

Issue
1. The SBCTC supports TWI. Their performance measures focus on intensive job skills training tied to specific employers and sectors, but SBCTC believes that TWI activities will contribute to outcomes in this area, as does work-study, tuition assistance, and intensive basic skills. The colleges that SBCTC talked to about TWI are enthusiastic and they believe that TWI will be supported locally in communities where partners are ready to collaborate on TWI.

   The continual cuts the colleges have taken to their WorkFirst funding have limited their ability to require training beyond what they currently require in the Block Grant. On the other hand, the Block Grant offers the flexibility for colleges to participate in TWI to the extent they feel it is possible.

   The SBCTC has reported to Sub-Three that they will not be including specific language in the 03-04 WorkFirst Block Grant to indicate that colleges must use block grant funds to support TWI, but they will encourage and support TWI's inclusion as a Best Practice.

   The partners are discussing ways to resolve this issue. The Employment Security Department has offered a possible solution for consideration and is

waiting for the decision.

- Options to consider:
- Contract locally with community and technical colleges to provide these services.
- Purchase these services from for profit vendors or community based organizations.

2. The ESD organizational field capacity is not sufficient to implement the comprehensive TWI model. Therefore, ESD is proposing to phase in the TWI model, to implement Phase I field offices that currently maintain the necessary resources for implementation; Phase II offices that have facilities and staffing issues, and Phase III sites which lack the resources necessary to fully implement TWI and will implement a modified version. The expectation is to fully implement TWI at as many sites statewide as possible.

3. Also, due to tight budgets within ESD, there is a no growth policy in place on resources for infrastructure and technical growth.

4. The WorkFirst partners are currently researching and discussing additional caseload reduction strategies and policy changes. One consideration is to require up-front job search, for a specified time period, as a condition of TANF eligibility. If approved, this strategy would conflict with the TWI approach and create two separate job search methodologies.